

Testimony
House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice
February 13, 2018
HB 2581

Chairman Jennings, Vice Chair Whitmer, Ranking Minority Member Highberger and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to stand before you today in support of HB 2581.

Six weeks ago, if you had asked me to define “swatting”, I would picture my mother, Dorothy Evans, with a switch from the lilac bush outside our Kansas City home, punishing me for some wrongdoing. It was the 1970s, it was a different time. This year we have been presented with a different, and much more serious, definition.

While much publicity has been given to the swatting incident in Wichita, a similar incident occurred in my district in Overland Park, KS, only a few blocks from my home.

On January 15, 2018, the Overland Park Police Department received a 911 call from a male who identified himself as “Jason”. He said he had accidentally shot his wife in the head, however she was still breathing. He told the police he was armed with a high-powered assault weapon and would shoot any approaching police officer.

Police surrounded the home, two officers approached the front door, knocked and requested that the occupants exit the home. One of the officers heard a faint sound and believed it to be the sound of a window shade moving up or down. The officers retreated from the home, the Tactical Operations Unit was notified and staged at a nearby elementary school.

Over the next hour, the police dispatch located the phone number for the residence, called the home and spoke with a child who said he was home with his brother and his father, who was asleep. They were also able to contact the mother, who was at work. All three family members exited the home safely.

No one in the family knew this “Jason”. The police pinged the cell phone number to Seattle, Washington, and the Seattle police department were dispatched to the address and spoke with a juvenile at the home. However, the police concluded that this juvenile did not make the call. The incident is still under investigation.

Thankfully, this occurrence ended without an injury or a fatality. However, neighbors were told to shelter in place in their homes, additional police officers were called into work or worked overtime. Bottom line: tax payer dollars were wasted. Were it not for the exceptional response from the Overland Park police, this incident could very easily have ended in tragedy.

Swatting hoaxes are not funny. They are not simply “prank calls”. Actions have consequences and should someone be harmed or killed, the callers must be held accountable for their actions.

Again, thank you for holding this hearing and allowing me the opportunity to stand before you today in support of HB 2581.

Sincerely,

Patty Markley
Representative, District 8